



# Notre Dame MBA Interview Resource Guide

Graduate Business Career Development

# Notre Dame MBA Interview Resource Guide

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# Pre- Interview Networking Events



More casual, NOT informal

Be personable/  
conversational

Still evaluative

Must do

***But Be Yourself!***



# The Importance of Making a Good First Impression: The First 5 Minutes is Critical

- Research indicates that 30.4% of interviewers decide whether to move forward with a candidate within the first 5 minutes
  - An additional 29.5% decided between 5-15 minutes
  - ‘Confirmation Bias’...Tinder; Bumble

Original Article

## How quickly do interviewers reach decisions? An examination of interviewers' decision-making time across applicants

Rachel E. Frieder , Chad H. Van Iddekinge, Patrick H. Raymark

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 score 62

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Organizational Psychology*



# Making a Good First Impression

- **Be on time** (i.e. >15 minutes early for in-person interviews; 5 minutes early for virtual interviews to test connection)
- **Be prepared** (research the company and your interviewers)
- **Dress the part** - Most often for men, nicely tailored suit and tie in basic colors. For women, your best options are generally a conservative two-piece suit with either full length pants or knee-length skirt with dark close-toed shoes and hosiery near your natural skin color. If you wear jewelry, it's advised to do so in moderation. For both genders it's generally best to avoid busy patterns and bright colors that may distract focus away from you. This said, some companies don't require the business professional look anymore depending. Make sure you understand what is expected, and wear neat, clean, and well pressed clothing. If in doubt err on the side of more traditionally dressed up. It's always easier to lose a tie or jacket in a situation where you may find you are overdressed than the other way around.
- **Bring only the essentials**—have a nice padfolio and extra resumes; ditch the backpack
- **Be nice...to everybody!**
- **Put your phone away while you wait**
- **Smile, make good eye contact, and greet your interviewer warmly**



# Making a Good First Impression

## Additional Tips for for Virtual Interviews:

1. check that your camera is level to your face to avoid the “nostril effect”;
2. have good lighting in the room / free of glare;
3. have good sound (often times computer speakers can have extra background noise so you might use a discrete headset for better sound quality);
4. remove any background clutter from your view;
5. show up dressed just as you would for an in-person interview;
6. test your equipment and location ahead of time;
7. on the day of the interview you logon early to ensure your connection is working properly;
8. consider scheduling an interview room in the Duncan Student Center if possible to mitigate the items above;
9. make good eye contact with the camera when speaking and exude extra positive energy to compensate for the physical distance; and
10. DOUBLE CHECK YOUR TIMZONE (invariably every year we have students miss an interview because their interviewer is in a different time zone).

# First 5 Minutes

- Open with Small Talk / Make a Connection, follow the interviewers lead



- Remember that “Activities & Interests” section on your resume?

- Writer of science fiction
- Hiked up Mt. Kilimanjaro
- Woodworker
- Coached college club hockey team
- Winner of several national rowing cups
- Cake baker
- Fine arts acrylic painter
- Greeting card maker

# Typical Opening Questions: Resume Walk vs. Tell Me About Yourself

- Resume Walk
  - Chronological flow, starting with undergrad, typically works best
  - Transitions—and reasons for them—are especially important
  - End with transition to MBA and future plans
  - Shoot for 3 minutes
- Tell Me About Yourself
  - Start with a description of who you are (pitch/summary version)
  - Highlight 3-4 points from your experience that make you stand out
  - End by telling them why you're in the room
  - Shoot for 3 minutes
- Suggestion: Script out each answer and practice frequently. The goal is to be well-rehearsed, without sounding memorized/scripted.



# Why [company name here] ?

- If you don't handle this well, it's nearly impossible to recover
- Could be asked near start or at very end
- Your answer should indicate that:
  - You've done your homework (e.g., company research, networking, etc.)
  - You understand how this company/position aligns with your career goals
  - You're interested in the job and will be motivated to perform if you get it

## Why Alcoa? (Example of what **NOT** to say...)

I'm looking for a finance role at a large, global industrial firm, and I know Alcoa traditionally seeks out MBAs for these positions. In addition, I have family in the Pittsburgh area and really like it there. All in all I think it's a great fit!

# Why \_\_\_\_\_? One Approach



What the Company Does

First of all, I'm inspired by Apple's focus on the user. Accessibility has been a priority ensuring that everyone can benefit from the 'what's next' focus of the organization.

Cultural/Fit Aspects  
(based on your  
research)

Based on my research, I also know Apple is serious about developing a diverse organization, and that's important to me. I think I can both contribute to, and gain from, Apple's culture of inclusion.

The Role

What I love about this role, specifically, is that it allows for creativity in bringing the best talent into the organization. I believe my strengths are well-suited to the role, and I'm confident I'll be able to hit the ground running.

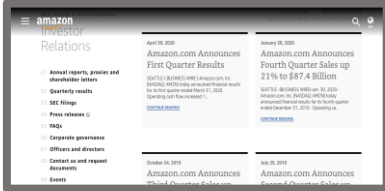
# Sources of Company Research



**People:** Alumni, Classmates, Second-Year Students



**Digital:** Vault, WetFeet, Mahaffey Business Library (e.g., Hoovers’s Company profiles), MBA-Exchange, Glasdoor, Google, DOME



**Investor Relations Page Is a MUST** for Public firms. Know their performance and prospects. Read the Chairman’s Letter to Shareholders. Look for “Events and Presentations” page.

# After The Interview

## Follow Up

- Get your interviewers’ contact info
- Email is fine for thank-you notes
- Keep thank you’s short and sweet
- Stay professional and not personal

## Know the “Rules”

- On-Campus Recruiting guidelines at [recruitmendoza.nd.edu](http://recruitmendoza.nd.edu)
- Off-Campus Recruiting may require you to play by the company’s practices

# Typical Interview Types

1. **Fit:** Mainly job and cultural fit
2. **Technical:** Domain skill depth
3. **Case:** Cognitive business skills
4. **Behavioral:** Past predicts future



# Fit Questions

Designed to determine whether or not you are a fit for the job and/or workplace culture

- What motivated you to change careers?
- Why did you choose Notre Dame's MBA program?
- How would your colleagues describe your leadership style?
- What are your top strengths? Weaknesses?

# Technical Questions

Specific to the role you have applied for; used to assess technical skills/capabilities

- How does an insurance company make money?
- Can you walk me through the three main valuation approaches?
- How would you explain to the relationship between the Income Statement, Balance Sheet, and the Cash Flow Statement?
- If two business units have different gross margins, but the same operating margin, what could be happening?

# Case Questions

Used to evaluate your ability to resolve business questions, situations, problems or challenges

- Why are manhole covers round?
- How many gas stations are in the U.S.?
- Your sales have grown 20% over the past 3 years, but your market share is down. What's happening, and what would you do?
- Your nephew runs a lemonade stand. He was open yesterday from 2-5 pm, and sold 2 cups. What should he do differently tomorrow?

You could be sent a case in advance and told to prepare and deliver a presentation/handle a Q&A session.

# Behavioral Questions

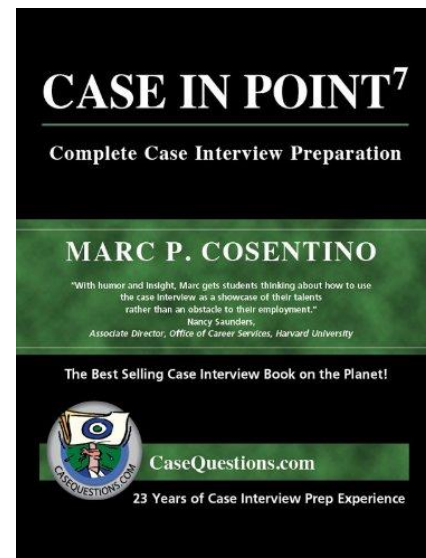
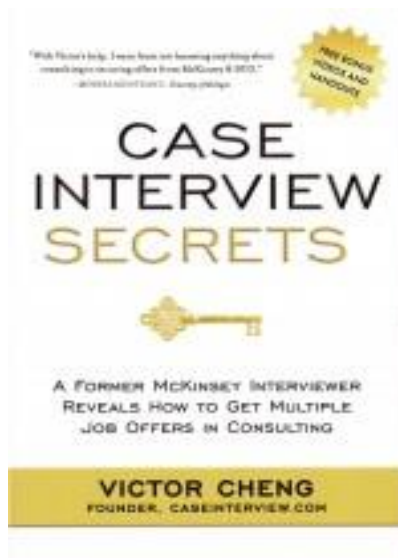
- Designed to learn about your past “behaviors” in specific work situations (e.g., “Tell me about a time when...”)
- This is where your CAR stories come into play...



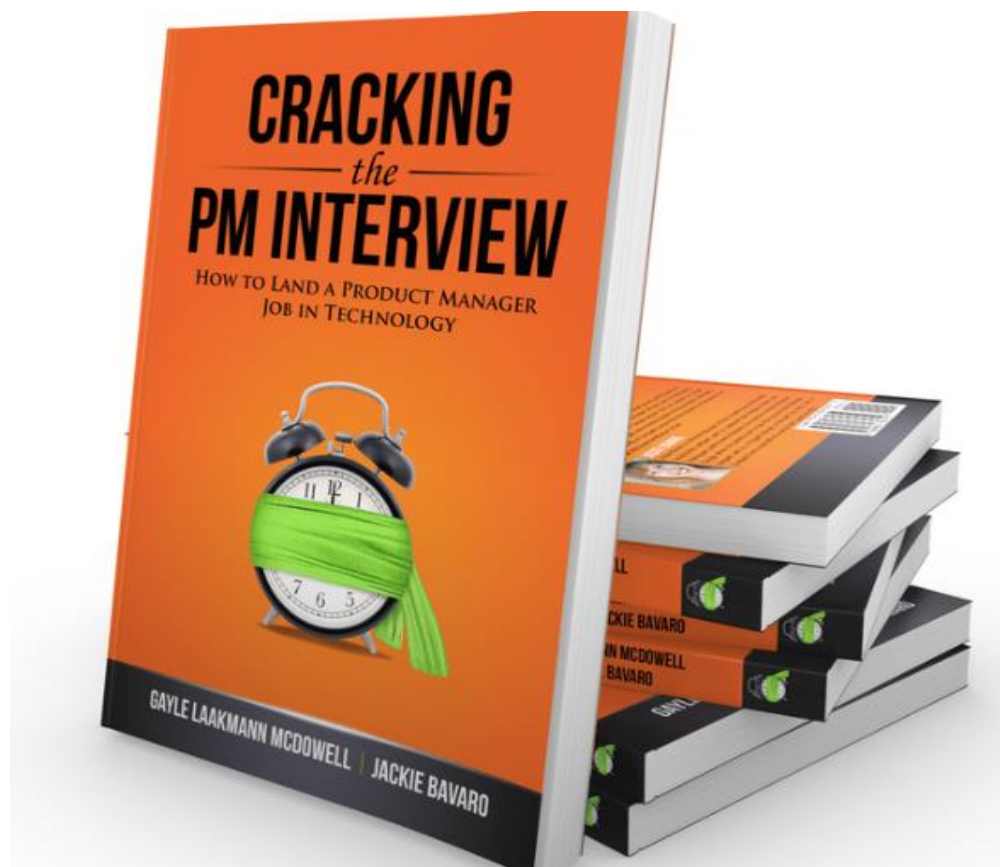


# Case Questions - Resources

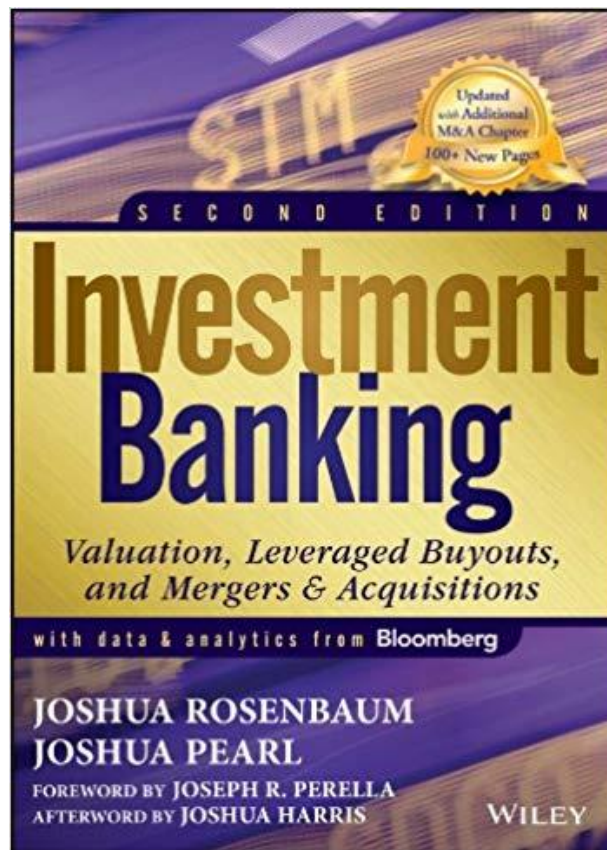
- Victor Cheng and Marc Cosentino (consulting focus)



# Product Management - Resources

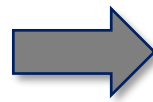


# Investment Banking - Resources



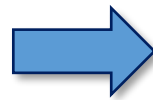
# Fit, Technical, and Case Resources

**Fit Questions**



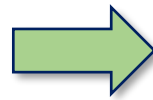
**Yourself, Classmates,  
Coaches, DOME**

**Technical Questions**



**Coursework, Experience,  
Clubs, Coaches, DOME**

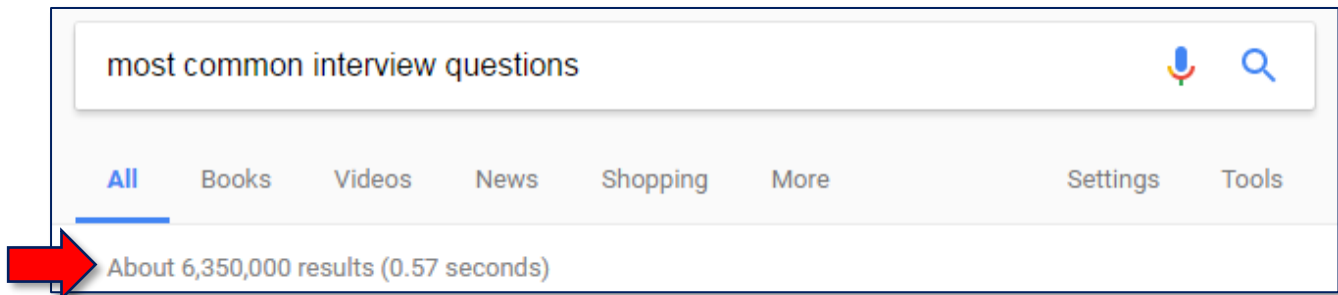
**Case Questions**



**Clubs, Coursework,  
Coaches, Case Prep Books,  
DOME**

# Sample Behavioral Questions

- There's no magic list of behavioral questions



- Focus on your top stories vs. trying to write a different answer for each behavioral question you might get in an interview

## Behavioral Question Resources

- Our general sample behavior question list (found in the DOME Resource Library) is intentionally long, but broken out by skills
- See the DOME Interview Database by Company as well for specific questions asked by company at past interviews. And don't forget to pay it forward by populating questions after you've interviewed with companies.
- Glassdoor

### DOME

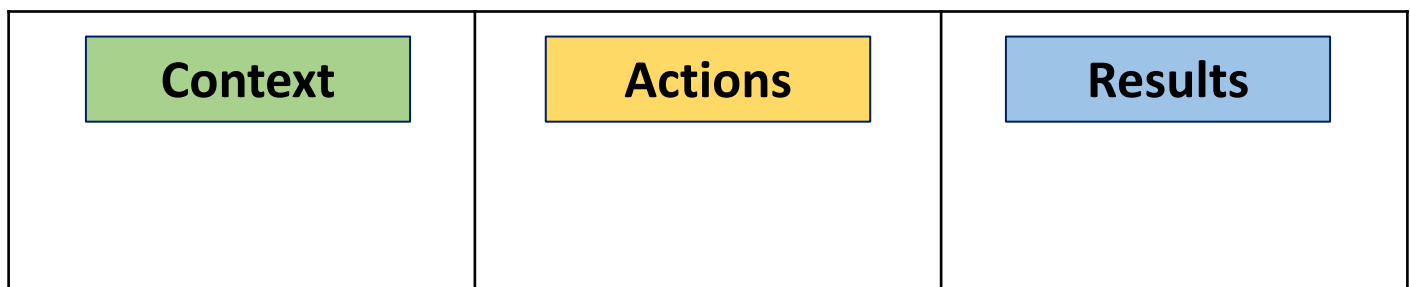
Data, Opportunities, Meetings and Events

#### Interview Database

Review interview questions and insights from past graduates by employer, industry, function, and more.



# Remember the C-A-R Framework?



- Preferred method of answering behavioral questions
- Effective way to demonstrate how you apply your working style, skills and knowledge to a range of specific experiences
- Most recruiters expect you to structure responses using it

# C-A-R Story Tips

- Shoot for 3 minutes or less per story
- Allocate your time as follows:
  - Context 20% (~30 seconds)
  - Actions 60% (~90 seconds)
  - Result 20% (~30 seconds)
- Play offense...look for ways to work your best stories in!
  - Top stories can likely be used to answer more than one question
- Make sure you're answering the question that was asked
- Document your stories, and practice until you know them cold



# Why You?

- I am analytically-minded; I like puzzles, and I enjoy digging in to see how things work in an effort to reach a goal
- This is an opportunity to combine my client facing skills with an interest in helping a client company grow and improve its operating model
- I have been taking online course in investments while actively following the markets and doing my own personal investing; I have been successfully assisting family members with low-key financial planning for several years
- There is a lot of satisfaction in directly or indirectly helping an individual improve his or her individual or family's financial future based on the decisions I would make as an investment analyst



# Your Questions of Them

## From Their Perspective:

- Are you Interested? Engaged? Informed?



“If an applicant doesn't have any questions for me, that's a red flag. I'm thinking that they either don't care or can't be bothered to do research about my company.”

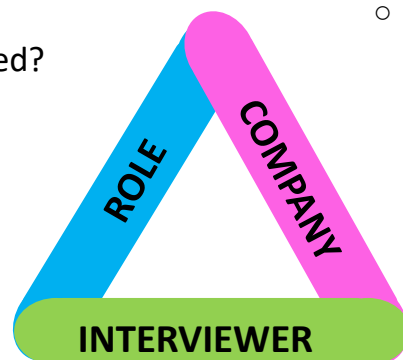
## Tips for Asking Great Questions

### Keep in Mind...

- Questions don't just 'ask', they 'tell.'
- What you ask says a lot about you:
  - Strategic?
  - Informed?
  - Value-oriented?
  - Thorough?

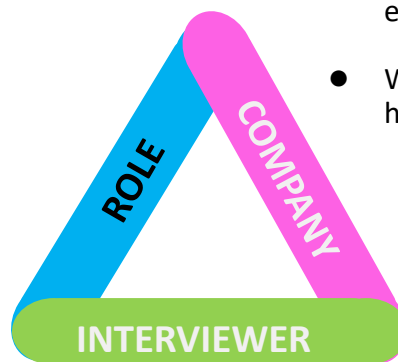
### Have Some Objectives...

- This is your time for research
- Also, this is your sales “close”
  - Do you really want to work here?
  - Do they have any reservations about you?



## Sample Questions about the Role

- Is there such a thing as ‘the typical day’ and, if so, what’s it like?
- Fast forward a year: my new boss is providing my performance evaluation and it’s excellent. What specific goals have I achieved?
- Can you share with me the critical internal relationships I will be expected to develop in my first year?
- Is there anything concerning you about my background or qualifications for success in this role?



## Sample Questions about the Company

- What priorities need to happen if the company’s successful in achieving its plans in the next few years?
- What does competitive success look like for this organization? What does it take to build market share?
- What behaviors are most valued and rewarded here?
- What qualities do senior leaders try hard to exemplify?
- What are the primary values that really hold the company together?

## Sample Questions about the Interviewer

- What led you to this company? What keeps you here?
- What’s your favorite thing about working here?
- Can you describe the best, highest-impact project you’ve worked on so far?
- I’ve read that the company is [focusing more on international growth / streamlining operations to reduce costs / investing more in R&D / etc.]. How is that affecting you?

# Do's and Don'ts of Your Questions

## DO



### 1. Direct your questions appropriately

- Line managers can answer questions that HR managers can't, and vice-versa
- Senior leaders focus on value; middle managers on cost; junior people on tasks

### 2. Personalize your questions

- "How would you describe the culture?" vs. "What is the culture?"

### 3. Ask about next steps

- It indicates interest and a future-focus

## DON'T

### 1. Ask questions you can answer yourself

- "What is the company's mission?"
- "What are the qualifications for this role?"

### 2. Ask questions merely to impress them

- Embarrassing your interviewer is not a best practice
- They could flip it back to you: "Good question. What would you say?"

### 3. Ask about salary and benefits

- This is a topic for discussion once you've received an offer (you can also enlist your coach for additional guidance at that point in the process)